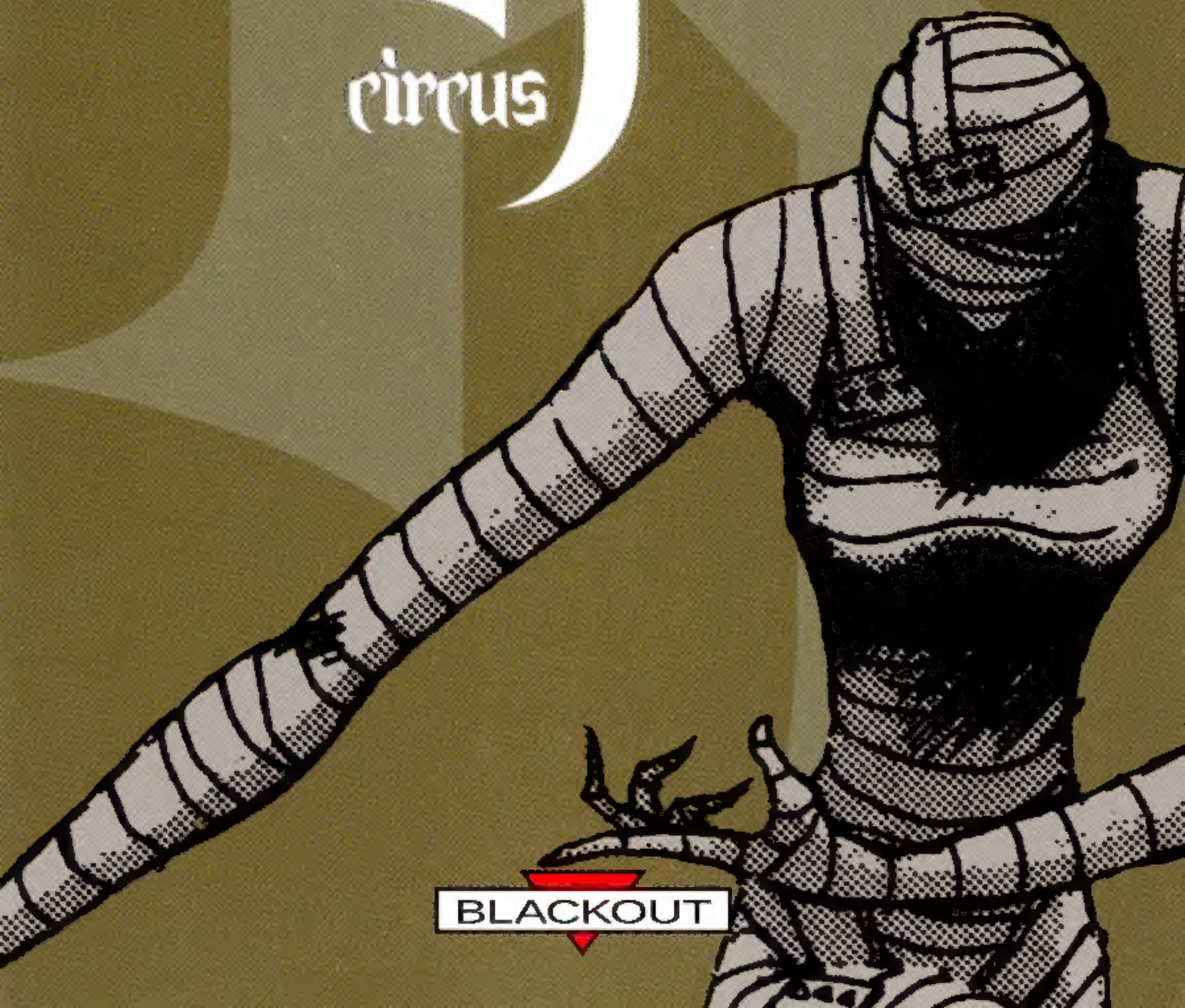
KAZUHIRO FUJITA

# Karakuri circus 10



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# karakuri circus

10

KAZUHIRO FUJITA

## ★ SUMMARY OF THE PREVIOUS VOLUMES ★

DURING HIS STAY IN PARIS, NARUMI KATO WAS NOT ABLE TO RECOVER HIS MEMORY. HAVING DECIDED TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE GUY AND LUCILLE, THE YOUNG MAN LEARNED FROM THE LATTER THE ORIGIN OF SHIROGANES AND THE HISTORY OF CONFLICTS MARKING THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN AUTOMATONS AND SHIROGANES. AS EXPECTED, HE WAS VERY SURPRISED. DURING THIS TIME, AN AUTOMATON NAMED ARLEQUINO APPEARED, AND THE THREE SHIROGANES WERE FORCED TO FIGHT A DESPERATE BATTLE AGAINST HIM. NARUMI THEN LEARNED THAT THE SOFT STONE, WHICH ALLOWS THE CREATION OF AQUA VITAE (THE ALL-POWERFUL ELIXIR THAT HEALS ALL DISEASES), IS BEING SOUGHT AFTER BY BOTH AUTOMATONS AND SHIROGANES AND IS THE REAL CAUSE OF THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN THEM.
IN ORDER TO FIND THIS STONE, WHICH IS THE KEY TO THIS STORY, NARUMI AND HIS COMPANIONS HAVE ARRIVED IN THE PRINCIPALITY OF LOHENSTEIN WITH ONLY A SENTENCE FOR A CLUE: "THE SOFT STONE IS WITH THE ONE WITH A GOOD SMILE".
A NEW FIGHT AWAITS THEM AS THEY TRY TO SAVE PRINCESS ELISE, WHO HAS BEEN ABDUCTED BY AUTOMATONS...



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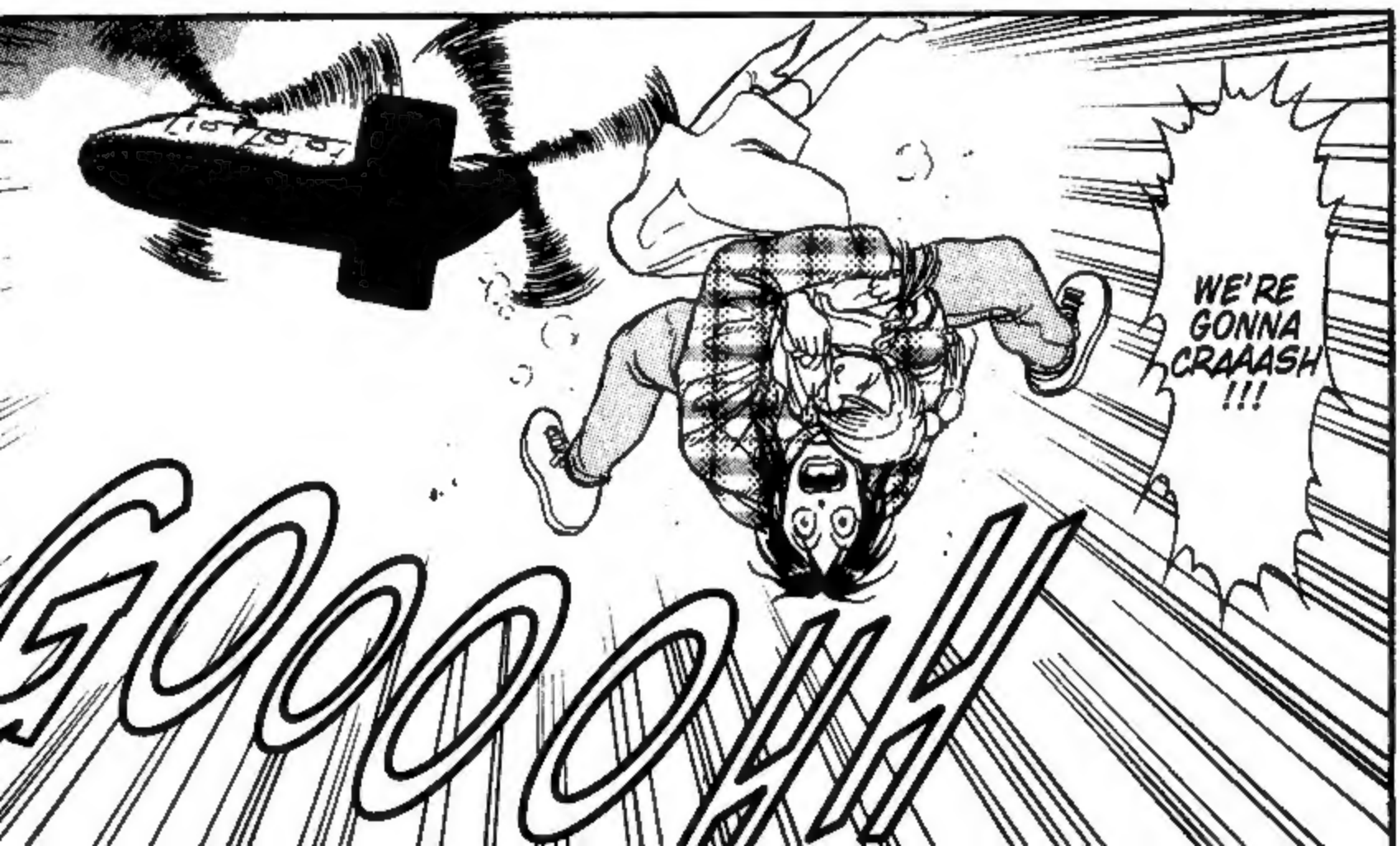
# ACT VIII : KARAKURI *
# THE PRINCESS OF THE AUTOMATONS
# "BARON GÜNTHER"



FIND THEIR DROP POINT!

DAMMIT! WE HAD ORDERS TO BRING HER BACK ALIVE!

TANTA

WHAT WAS THAT?!

VOM

IN HAMLET, SHAKE-SPEARE SAYS...

FLAP

ZZAAA

...THAT WICKEDNESS HAS NO HOLD ON THE SIMPLE-MINDED!

NARUMI!

GUY?!

COME NOW...

IT WASN'T WORTH IT TO COME...

...SAVE ME...

ANYWAY, LET'S LAND.

WEIRD...

FLAP FLAP

SAH...

HUH? WHAT?

FIRST OFF, LET'S INFORM OUR EMPLOYER.

WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?

AP'TCHA... ARE THOSE THE SHIROGANES YOU TOLD US ABOUT?!

AN EXTREMELY STRONG MAN... AND A FLYING PUPPET...

DA DA DA DA

AH...

THAT DREAM AGAIN ...

REALLY, NARUMI!

WHAT GOES ON IN THAT HEAD OF YOURS?!

YOU HAD TO GO HEAD TO HEAD WITH THAT WEIRD AUTOMATON, WHICH ONLY MADE THE SITUATION WORSE!

BUT...

I COULD HAVE EASILY DESTROYED THEM WITH OLYMPIA!

WHEN THE PRINCESS WAS ABDUCTED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS CORNER OUR ENEMIES.

BAH... UH...

UH... YES... LET'S SAY...

MY PLAN WASN'T PERFECT ... BUT...

IF OLYMPIA HADN'T BEEN THERE IN TIME, YOU'D BOTH BE DEAD!

THEN YOU JUMP OUT, WITHOUT THINKING!

IF THE PRINCESS HAD BEEN INJURED, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE, HUH?!

AND AFTERWARD, THAT WHOLE BUSINESS IN THE HELI-COPTER!

VLAAP

IF SHE DIED, WE COULD HAVE LOST THE STONE FOREVER!!!

LET ME REMIND YOU THAT WE THINK THE PRINCESS IS THE CONTAINER FOR THE SOFT STONE!!!

"NOT PERFECT"?! YOU CHEEKY BASTARD !!!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

IT'S REALLY RARE TO MEET SOMEONE WHO CAN ANGER SHIROGANES SO MUCH, SINCE THEY'RE WELL-KNOWN FOR THEIR SELF-CONTROL...

YES! I'M SOWWWY! I SUUUCKED !!!

YOU'RE AWAKE!

EN-CHANTED, PRINCESS...

...IN MY BODY?

A "SOFT STONE"...

LEAVE ME BE.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?! I'M SORRY FOR ALL THAT HAPPENED...

WHAT IS YOUR PART IN THIS AFFAIR?

WHO ARE YOU?

WHAT IS A SOFT STONE?

I WAS ASKING THESE TWO PERSONS.

AH...

NARUMI... YOUR PRESENCE WILL PROBABLY DISTURB OUR EXPLANATIONS. CAN YOU GO OUTSIDE FOR A WHILE, PLEASE?

...TO ANSWER IT ALL POINT BY POINT.

YOUR HIGHNESS, ALLOW US...

YOU ARE... NARUMI?

I WILL TELL YOU FRANKLY.

WHATEVER... ANYWAY, WE'RE NOT THE SAME, YOU AND I!

PFFFT! YOU'RE THROWING ME OUT?!

I HAVE NO GRATITUDE TO ANYONE JUST BECAUSE I AM STILL ALIVE!

SO

I NEVER WANTED TO TURN EIGHTEEN!

...

YOU MEAN... YOU'D HAVE PREFERRED TO DIE?

.. FOR ALL THAT WASTED EFFORT!

BUT... THANK YOU ANYWAY...

HI HI

GUY, LUCILLE... IF THAT SENTENCE, "THE SOFT STONE IS WITH THE ONE WITH A GOOD SMILE", IS TRUE...

I SEE...

Rub Rub

YES.

TAH

...IS AS FAKE AS A MANNEQUIN'S!

HER SMILE...

...YOU'RE NOT GONNA FIND THAT STONE IN THE BODY OF THIS PRINCESS.

...

BUT...

CLAC!

NOW, I WILL EXPLAIN EVERY-THING...

NARUMI!

AH... IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

I HEARD THAT YOUR LADY FRIEND WAS SICK?

SHIT SHIT SHIT! WHAT A STUCK-UP BIMBO, THAT PRINCESS !!!

HE LIVES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN... IT'S A BIT FAR, BUT...

IT'S NO PROBLEM! DO YOU WANT MY SON TO GO GET A DOCTOR?

I SINCERELY THANK YOU FOR LENDING US A ROOM FOR HER!

...WE DON'T HAVE OUR OWN DOCTOR.

...IN A TOWN AS SMALL AS OURS...

WE SPEND TOO MUCH MONEY ON DEVELOPING HIGH-TECH COMPANIES... OUR PRINCE DOESN'T SUBSIDIZE CITY DOCTORS ANYMORE.

VLONG

YOU'RE JAPANESE, RIGHT? ACTUALLY, I THINK OUR COUNTRY IS BECOMING LIKE YOURS.

WOW! I DIDN'T THINK THIS KIND OF STUFF COULD HAPPEN IN SUCH A RICH COUNTRY!!!

YOU KNOW, I'M PRETTY GOOD AT MANUAL LABOR...

LEAVE IT! I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT!

GOH

GOTTA MOVE THIS OVER THERE?

OUR FRIEND ISN'T IN SUCH BAD SHAPE. NO NEED TO CALL A DOCTOR.

In Japan, we call this game "otedama"

DON'T BOTHER THE MAN, FRANCIS!

WOW! FOUR BOXES AT ONCE?! AWESOME!

Hop

SO YOU BELIEVE THAT THIS "SOFT STONE" MAY BE INSIDE ME?!

THIS STORY IS SO INCREDIBLE THAT I HAVE A HARD TIME BELIEVING IT...

...AND THAT'S THE WHOLE STORY, YOUR HIGHNESS.

MY UNCLE, BARON GÜNTHER, WHO IS MY FATHER'S OLDER BROTHER, HAD TO GIVE UP THE THRONE... HE WAS MUCH TOO SICK TO SHOULDER ALL THE RESPONSIBILITIES INHERENT TO A MONARCH'S POSITION.

SINCE AUTOMATONS WERE THERE, VERY MUCH SO.

AND THESE RECENT EVENTS ARE RELATED TO THAT?

YES, THAT'S RIGHT.

AND YOU ARE SAYING THAT FROM THIS STONE, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO MAKE "AQUA VITAE", AN ELIXIR THAT CAN CURE ALL DISEASES?!

THAT IS WHY I TRULY BELIEVE THAT I WAS KIDNAPPED ON THE BARON'S ORDERS...

HE'S EVEN STARTED TO TARGET ME IN THE LAST FEW YEARS.

UNFORTUNATELY, HE COULD NEVER GET PAST IT AND NOW BEARS A GRUDGE AGAINST MY FATHER.

...

PLEASE BE REASSURED, I AM A DOCTOR.

YOUR HIGHNESS, WOULD YOU ALLOW US TO EXAMINE YOUR BODY?

SAH...

VERY WELL... YOU ONLY NEED TO UNDRESS NOW.

I DO NOT FEEL THIS STONE INSIDE ME,

BUT I'LL ALLOW YOU.

SO BE IT.

DO NOT WORRY... SHIROGANES DO NOT HAVE ANY KIND OF FEELINGS.

FLAP

SAH

CLIP

IF YOU FIND THE STONE IN MY BODY...

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

WE CAN EXTRACT IT WITH A VERY MINOR SURGERY,

AFTER WHICH YOU CAN CONTINUE LIVING AS BEFORE, WITHOUT ANY SIDE EFFECT.

...*AS BEFORE* ?!

YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU WERE TRAVELING AND DESTROYING AUTOMATONS.

YES.

THAT MAN... WHO SAVED ME...

IS HE ALSO A *SHIROGANE*?

AH, NO!

HE IS JUST A HAPLESS IDIOT, YOUR HIGHNESS!

IT'S THE TRUTH!

THAT MAN IS THE SHAME OF SHIROGANES!

HER SMILE...

...IS AS FAKE AS A MANNE-QUIN'S!

HHH

BAINES ... YOU'VE ... FAILED ?!

WWWHHH

FHH
FHH
I GATHERED MEN...
...AND PREPARED A HELI-COPTER ...
FHH
...BARON GÜNTHER.
YES, SIR...
MY DEEPEST APOLO-GIES ...
FHH
AND AFTER ALL THAT, YOU FAILED?! YOU COULDN'T KIDNAP ELISE?!
-COUGH-
-HACK-
DESPITE YOUR PRESENCE, HE STILL FAILED HIS MISSION.
BUT... AP'TCHA...
DON'T GET UPSET, BARON...

I'LL TAKE THE REMEDY HIDDEN INSIDE ELISE'S BODY...

...AND RESTORE YOUR HEALTH.

AP'TCHA ...

DON'T WORRY, I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.

HE HE

THANK YOU... AP'TCHA...

BLACKOUT